

the girl was ignorant as to whether it was laparotomy or amputation. (Laughter.)

She gave next an instance as proof of the terrible indifference engendered by unintelligent attendance on a rapidly changing series of patients on the untaught nurse, describing them as viewing the patients as unrolling themselves before their eyes much as in a cinematograph.

On entering one of the side rooms she found a signorina holding in one hand the tube of the oxygen cylinder, whose jet was playing on the eyes of a dying patient, while in the other hand she held a novel condemned for offence against public morality. (Otraggio al pudore.) Happily the patient was past seeing, but the nurse was unconscious also of this fact, entirely absorbed in her book. (Murmurs of horror at this example of indifference; but had Signora Sciamanna thought fit, she could have related infinitely worse instances which have been given us by the doctors themselves.)

"However," she continued, "amongst the infirmière and signorine, there are everywhere some perfect examples of devotion and conscientiousness and intelligence, but . . . they are few.

"As a rule, they think mainly of their clothes, and especially of their hair arrangements, their coiffeur recalling that of the 'kellerine' (barmaids), not that of the creature anxious to console."

The difficulty brought forward frequently, that the close contact with the doctors prevent nice girls from becoming nurses, Signora Sciamanna admitted was justifiable at present in the hospitals, but did not apply to the cliniques here, as the professors were most severe in sending away any doctor who had given cause for complaint. Apropos of the doctor, she drew a portrait of the great surgeon, Professor Durante (in whose clinique we worked last spring, and who has now again confided to her the entire control of his nurses), who is adored by the patients, who look on him as "father or archangel," and who for some 15 to 18 years has striven courageously (though hitherto not very successfully, as Signora Sciamanna's little anecdotes prove!) to improve the nursing in his wards.

Signora Sciamanna terminated her discourse by expressing her hopes that the Government would intervene and insist that the difficult and important problem of improving hospital nursing should be solved, as it was long ago in England, and is now being done in France.

"We are the last," she announced, "but we so have the advantage of profiting by the example of others. Things can only improve by the presence in our hospitals of the right type of woman, who will bring her precious contribution of energy and serene strength, her perfect respectability, and continuous intelligent co-operation.

"And though my own personal desire is that nurses should not be paid, but nurse solely for the love of it [forming a sort of lay sisterhood, where

the individual receives no personal payment, but whose support and future is secure]; yet, as this might entail the loss of many valuable elements, I recognise that a sufficient remuneration should be offered," and she again quoted English hospitals, where the daughter of the peer or of the millionaire, together with girls of quite humble origin, "perform the same duties, receiving the same modest pay, which they are content to change into plants, pictures, or comforts for the patients. The real compensation for the true nurse is in accomplishing her duty ideally. And here England and Italy look on the nurse from the reverse standpoint. In England, to be a nurse raises you; in Italy, it degrades you (in public opinion).

"Intelligent and efficacious compassion should be the moving spirit of the nurse. There is far more satisfaction in this path of self-sacrifice and of dedication than in the multitude of most daily duties. May best blessings attend all those who shall choose this career of humble and unrecognised heroism."

This peroration met with tremendous applause. One lady I saw weeping, whilst others shouted expressions of admiration and agreement.

As soon as her voice could be heard, Signora Sciamanna proposed the following "ordine del giorno":—

- I.—That the hospital administrations should provide for the institution of a school, annexed to hospitals, where carefully-chosen girls should be trained professionally.
- II.—That these infirmière should be inscribed at the National Saving and Insurance Bank against maladies contracted during their service.
- III.—That a pension should be assured them.
- IV.—That to secure infirmière conscious of their mission and of the duty of humane and disciplined execution of hospital work, no nurse should be accepted who belonged to any league.

The fourth article excited tremendous discussion. It was formed with the object of eliminating the danger of strikes, which hitherto the "Lega" has used frequently as threat to extort better conditions for its infirmière-members, and which actually took place in 1907.

Professoressa Labriola maintained, however, that infirmière should have the right to form leagues, but not the right to go on strike, which ought to be made a penal offence.

An infirmiera, Signorina Dacher, stated that those members of the league who proclaimed the strike of 1907 were expelled from the federation.

A good deal of excitement and heat entered into the discussion, so that, without passing to the vote, the President declared the discussion closed, and called on another section to read their papers.

But the great point is that the question of nursing reform is at last meeting with serious consideration here, and we may hope for great things within the next few years, now that Italians themselves are making it an "apostolato."

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